A man with short dark hair and sunglasses is sitting on a wooden bench in a stadium. He is wearing a brown jacket over a light-colored collared shirt and dark trousers. His hands are clasped in his lap. The background consists of many rows of empty wooden bleachers, creating a sense of solitude. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

**HANK BALLARD**  
& THE MIDNIGHTERS  
**UNWIND YOURSELF**

THE  **KING**  
RECORDINGS  
1964-1967

**KENT**  
SOUL

# HANK BALLARD & THE MIDNIGHTERS

UNWIND YOURSELF • THE <sup>REISSUE</sup> KING RECORDINGS • 1964-1967


Hank's surviving 1964-67 King sessions, reissued in their entirety for the first time.

1. LET'S GET THE SHOW ON THE ROAD King 5954 (1964) 2.33
2. THAT'S YOUR MISTAKE King LP 913 (1965) 2.04
3. HE CAME ALONG King 6055 (1966) 2.30
4. POPPIN' THE WHIP King 5996 (1965) 2.50
5. ONE MONKEY DON'T STOP NO SHOW King 5963 (1965) 2.46
6. EVERYBODY DO WRONG King LP 913 (1965) 2.50
7. HERE COMES THE HURT King 6092 (1967) 2.38
8. KNOCK ON WOOD I FEEL SO GOOD King LP 913 (1965) 2.37
9. WATCH WHAT I TELL YOU King 5963 (1965) 2.55
10. A WINNER NEVER QUITS King 5954 (1964) 3.13
11. SOMEBODY'S GOT TO HELP ME King LP 913 (1965) 2.47
12. SLOOP AND SLIDE King 6018 (1966) 2.44
13. YOU, JUST YOU King 5996 (1965) 2.16
14. GET THAT HUMP IN YOUR BACK Scheduled as King 6055 (2016) 2.50
15. I'M JUST A FOOL (AND EVERYBODY KNOWS) King 6001 (1965) 2.36
16. TOGETHERNESS King 6031 (1966) 3.01
17. DANCE TILL IT HURTCHA King 6092 (1967) 1.57
18. I'M READY King 6031 (1966) 2.55
19. TEARDROPS ON YOUR LETTER King 6196 (1968) 2.54
20. MY SUN IS GOING DOWN King 6018 (1966) 2.45
21. DO IT ZULU STYLE King 6001 (1965) 2.11
22. (DANCE WITH ME) ANNIE King 6055 (1966) 2.36
23. YOU'RE IN REAL GOOD HANDS King 6119 (1967) 2.02
24. WHICH WAY SHOULD I TURN King 6131 (1967) 3.36\*
25. UNWIND YOURSELF King 6119 (1967) 2.18\*
26. FUNKY SOUL TRAIN King 6131 (1967) 2.32\*

Mono except \* Stereo



Compilation and notes by  
TONY ROUNCE

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#	Title	Writer	Year Issued	Matrix # / recording date	Catalogue #
1	LET'S GET THE SHOW ON THE ROAD	Hank Ballard	1964	K11906 2/6/64	King 5954
2	THAT'S YOUR MISTAKE	Rudolph Toombs	1965	K11916 12/6/64	King IP 913
3	HE CAME ALONG	Hank Ballard	1966	K12122 19/7/66	King 6055
4	POPPIN' THE WHIP	Hank Ballard	1965	K12028 18/2/65	King 5996
5	ONE MONKEY DON'T STOP NO SHOW	Sonny Thompson	1965	K11914 12/6/64	King 5963
6	EVERYBODY DO WRONG	Hank Ballard	1965	K11907 2/6/64	King LP 913
7	HERE COMES THE HURT	Gordon Brisker, Bud Hobgood, Ural Thomas	1967	K12336 4/2/67	King 6092
8	KNOCK ON WOOD I FEEL SO GOOD	Hank Ballard	1965	K11908 2/6/64	King LP 913
9	WATCH WHAT I TELL YOU	Windsor King, John Stephens	1965	K11917 12/6/64	King 5963
10	A WINNER NEVER QUILTS	Willie Hooks	1964	K11909 2/6/64	King 5954
11	SOMEBODY'S GOT TO HELP ME	Hank Ballard	1965	K11915 12/6/64	King LP 913
12	SLOOP AND SLIDE	Hank Ballard	1966	K12073 15/11/65	King 6018
13	YOU, JUST YOU	Hank Ballard	1965	K12029 18/2/65	King 5996
14	GET THAT HUMP IN YOUR BACK	Hank Ballard	2016	K12123 19/7/66	Scheduled for King 6055
15	I'M JUST A FOOL (AND EVERYBODY KNOWS)	Rudy Clark	1965	K12037 2/7/65	King 6001
16	TOGETHERNESS	Hank Ballard	1966	K12074 15/11/65	King 6031
17	DANCE TILL IT HURTCHA	Hank Ballard, Bud Hobgood	1967	K12335 4/2/67	King 6092
18	I'M READY	Hank Ballard	1966	K12076 15/11/65	King 6031
19	TEARDROPS ON YOUR LETTER	Henry Glover	1968	K12126/K12744 22/7/66	King 6196
20	MY SUN IS GOING DOWN	Hank Ballard	1966	K12075 15/11/65	King 6018
21	DO IT ZULU STYLE	Rudy Clark	1965	K12036 2/7/65	King 6001
22	(DANCE WITH ME) ANNIE	Hank Ballard	1966	K12127 22/7/66	King 6055
23	YOU'RE IN REAL GOOD HANDS	Hank Ballard, Charles Spurling	1967	K12421 12/7/67	King 6119
24	WHICH WAY SHOULD I TURN	William Bowman, James Brown, Bud Hobgood, Troy Seals	1967	K12447 7/9/67	King 6131
25	UNWIND YOURSELF	Hank Ballard, Charles Spurling	1967	K 12422 12/7/67	King 6119
26	FUNKY SOUL TRAIN	James Brown, Bud Hobgood	1967	K12448 7/9/67	King 6131

Lark Music Ltd except 14 EMI Music Pub Ltd, 15 & 21 TM Music Ltd, 24 Warner Chappell North America Ltd, 26 Intersong Music Ltd





**HANK BALLARD's KING** tenure spanned three decades, lasting over 15 years. Despite recording plenty of tracks as good as those that charted between 1953's 'Get It', when Ballard and the Midnighters were known as the Royals, and 1961 when 'Nothing But Good' became their 20th R&B hit, Ballard had more than seven years without chart action. Ballard's earlier recordings have been extensively anthologised in the CD era: as single CDs by Ace and as a boxed set by Bear Family Records. The tracks he made in the mid-late 60s have, by contrast, hardly been anthologised at all. "Unwind Yourself" brings together 26 top tracks from the King vaults, all (but one) from the original master tapes recorded between the summer of 1964 and the end of 1967.

John Henry Kendrick was born in Detroit in 1936 and joined the Royals in late 1953 as a replacement for their lead singer, Lawson Smith. Their name changed to the Midnighters to avoid mix-ups with the "5" Royales and they had a string of smash hits in 1954 relating to a girl called Annie.

At the end of the 1950s a throwaway B-side of theirs, 'The Twist', started a dance craze earthquake that shook the whole of the planet after Chubby Checker was persuaded to record it. In 1960 and 1961, almost every record cut by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters hit the R&B Top 20 and the Hot 100, including the all-time classics 'Finger Poppin' Time', 'The Hoochi Coochi Coo', 'Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go' and – for the second time in just over a year – 'The Twist'.

Our collection begins with 'Let's Get The Show On The Road', a solid self-composed item in the style of Ballard and the Midnighters' 1960 chart-topper 'Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go'. One of eight songs recorded ten days apart in June, it was issued as Ballard's sixth single of 1964 in November. The previous five singles had been assembled from tracks recorded as far back as March 1961 and as recently as August 1963. Chronology of recording seldom played a big part in King's schedule, and after issuing a second single from the sessions – the excellent 'One Monkey Don't Stop No Show' – King boss Syd Nathan issued a pair of tracks from an



August 1963 session, followed by another pair from December 1962 as Ballard's next two 45s. Great records, but they sounded very dated by comparison with the latest Temptations or Impressions singles.

The remaining four tracks from those sessions were compiled onto the 1966 album "Those Lazy, Lazy Days" which also featured the two singles plus older tracks, some dating back to 1962. From the album-only tracks, Ballard's revival of Otis Williams and the Charms' 1955 recording 'That's Your Mistake' would certainly have made a



better single than some of those selected. February 1965 found Ballard and the Midnighters back in the King studios for the last time. The group effectively disbanded later that year, although subsequent Ballard 45s continued to bear their name on the credits. They recorded three songs, including the up-to-the-minute dance tune 'Poppin' The Whip'. Despite a hooky chorus and some striking whiplash effects to help get its message over, it didn't catch on. (The other song from the session 'Doctor Lover' is missing from the vaults. It may have been scrapped after Syd Nathan decided to issue their 1962 version, previously unissued, as a 45 instead.)

14 weeks after the 'Poppin' The Whip' session, James Brown recorded 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' in a shoebox-sized studio in Charlotte, North





Carolina and sent the tapes to King. It was issued as his return to the label after a brief period with Smash Records and it changed the face of black American music. By way of acknowledgement of its profound effect Syd Nathan made an attempt to update King's image and some of his artists whose careers, like Ballard's, had stagnated. To do this he engaged the services of high-profile songwriter-producer Steve Venet, whose songs were all over the radio and on TV, courtesy of the Reflections ('Poor Man's Son'), the Ikettes ('Peaches 'n' Cream', 'Fine, Fine, Fine') and Freddy Cannon (the theme from the prime time US TV music show Where The Action Is).

Nathan was very excited about working with Venet. In early 1965 he wrote to incarcerated King artist Little Willie John to tell him about his latest A&R man and mentioned that Venet had songs ready for John if his appeal was successful. Sadly that did not happen and indeed, it appears that the only King artist Venet worked with was Ballard, who cut two tracks under his supervision in New York in early July. 'I'm Just A Fool' and 'Do It Zulu Style' (or 'Zula Style' as the promo copies proclaimed) were written by renowned New York tunesmith Rudy Clark and published by Venet's pal Bobby Darin's TM Music.

Ballard had seldom recorded anything other than his own material and may not have been too keen on having outside material foisted

upon him. But he wanted a hit, and he made a very good job of the strong ballad 'I'm Just A Fool' as well as attacking the dance side with his usual gusto. It followed all Ballard's singles issued since 1961 into vinyl oblivion. Venet seems to have severed his King connections shortly afterwards, moving on to write for other artists.

Ballard was back in King's Brewster Avenue studios in November, with an unspecified line-up of Midnighters and a band under the direction of Pat Patterson, one of several musicians of that name and possibly the one who recorded for Mo-Ko and Warwick in the early 60s. The four sides were paired for issue as Ballard's next two singles. Both A-sides 'Sloop And Slide' and 'Togetherness' were decent efforts, but were wildly out of step with what was happening at Motown and Stax or even closer to home with his King label-mate James Brown. Neither had a sniff of chart action.

Ballard's next King sessions were held three days apart in Cincinnati in late July. He was backed by local favourites Beau Dollar and the Coins - essentially, the road band of stellar guitarist Lonnie Mack, who sat in on the first of the two sessions. You can hear Lonnie's unmistakable Magnatone amplifier working overtime on 'Get That Hump In Your Back' and the fabulous 'He Came Along'. The latter track was as deep a slice of soul as you would find on any record made in Memphis or Muscle



Shoals, but Nathan buried it on a B-side. He did not issue the lively 'Get That Hump In Your Back' despite originally scheduling it as the A-side of 'He Came Along'. Two of the four songs from the second July session are lost; the other two, issued on singles, re-made Ballard's 50s classics 'Work With Me Annie' – as 'Dance With Me Annie' – and 'Teardrops On Your Letter'.

Ballard was next in the King studios in February 1967, recording under the supervision of two members of James Brown's organisation, singer-songwriter Charles Spurling and Brown's right hand man, Bud Hobgood. This collaboration continued through Ballard's remaining King sessions, during the period covered by this CD and beyond. Occasionally James Brown would sit behind the desk with his two associates; almost all of Ballard's subsequent King

45s would bear the legend "A James Brown Production" whether Brown actually produced them or not.

The first two tracks recorded with Spurling and Hobgood, 'Go Back To The Country Girl' and 'Forgive Me', were not issued and are now lost. A tough slice of proto-funk 'Dance Till It Hurtcha' was paired with another strong soul ballad, 'Here Comes The Hurt'. This single sounded right for the time, but few bought it.



Ballard's next 45 came from a three-song session held in mid-July (the third track is lost). The driving funk of 'Unwind Yourself' has gained belated approval from DJs and dancers in this form and also the version by fellow King act Marva Whitney cut later in 1967. On release Ballard's version simply trailed in the slipstream of Brown's game-changing opus 'Cold Sweat' which entered the Hot 100 just three days after the 'Unwind Yourself' session. The track was compiled onto Ballard's final King album "You Can't Keep A Good Man Down", issued the following year.

The harder King and Ballard tried to restore his hit status, the further away the charts seemed to get. On 7 September he recorded the intense

southern-styled ballad 'Which Way Should I Turn' with Beau Dollar's band and Troy Seals providing the Lonnie Mack-style licks. The next day they cut 'Funky Soul Train', a workout that really brought its title to life. These two tracks were paired as a single, but without success.

Ballard eventually got one more big R&B hit. 'How You Gonna Get Respect (When You Haven't Cut Your Process Yet)' reached #15 R&B in late 1968. The label credit read Hank Ballard, Along With The Dapps – the latest line up of Beau Dollar's band, who had been on several recent James Brown sessions. To drive the song along, Brown recycled the rhythm track of his own #2 hit 'Licking Stick – Licking Stick' from earlier that year. He'd done something similar with Ballard's previous 45 'I'm Back To Stay', which used the rhythm track from Brown's 'There Was A Time' to get its message over. Apart from a small hit in 1972 with 'From The Love Side' – recycling yet another rhythm track, this time Marva Whitney's funk classic 'I Made A Mistake Because It's Only You' – Hank Ballard's chart career was done and dusted by the opening weeks of 1969.

Ballard left King in early 1970 and went to Memphis, where he cut a fine version of Kris Kristofferson's 'Sunday Morning Coming Down' for Lelan Rogers' Silver Fox Records, issued as a single and duets with Bettye Lavette that were not released until years later. It didn't sell well, nor did a lone 1971 45 for Chess, 'I'm A Junkie For My Baby's Love'.





When James Brown threw him a lifeline at the end of the year, Ballard grabbed it with both hands. He toured as part of the Brown Revue, cutting the occasional 45 and appearing on his boss' 1972 "Get On The Good Foot" album performing a recitation that sits somewhere between high kitsch and downright embarrassing. Next he pitched up at New Jersey's Stang/All Platinum organisation in 1975 where he cut a trio of 45s that are also high kitsch, as the titles 'Let's Go Streaking' and 'Let's Go Skinny Dipping' confirm. Ballard's last 45, 'Freak Your Boom Boom Parts 1 & 2' is probably best forgotten. Produced by R&B legends Luther Dixon and H.B. Barnum, this 1979 Le Joint single is a low point for all concerned. It may well have been the catalyst for Ballard's retirement the following year.

By the mid-80s Ballard and a re-formed Midnighters were back, playing the oldies circuit and touring the world until not long before Ballard's death on 2 March 2003. He had earned enough songwriter income from 'The Twist', 'Work With Me Annie', 'Finger Poppin' Time' and other R&B perennials to have been relatively comfortable in his later years. In 1990 Ballard was one of 13 inductees into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall Of Fame; the other original Midnighters joined him 22 years later. An honour fully deserved by all concerned.

This collection may be light on hit records, but demonstrates conclusively that Hank Ballard made every effort to move with the times and to keep his career contemporary. 50 years on, they sound as vibrant and exciting as any of his best known efforts. It's a pleasure to return them to circulation after many years in the vaults.

**TONY ROUNCE / 2016**

Source: Michael Ruppli - The King Labels: A Discography, Vol 1 (Greenwood Press, 1985) With thanks to: Roger Armstrong, Lawrence Bailey, Stephen Hawkins and Mark Lamarr. Photographs courtesy King Records, Inc. Labels and LPs courtesy Ady Croasdel, Mark Lamarr, Bill Millar, Tony Rounce and Dean Rudland

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# HANK BALLARD & THE MIDNIGHTERS

## UNWIND YOURSELF

  
THE KING RECORDINGS  
1964-1967

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